

Church of the Holy Trinity (Protestant Episcopal)  
200 S. Nineteenth Street  
Philadelphia (Rittenhouse Square)  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1085

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA  
677-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
PA  
SI - PHILA  
C92 -

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY  
(Protestant Episcopal)

HABS No. PA-1085

Location: 200 S. Nineteenth Street, Rittenhouse Square,  
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: The Rector, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of the Church of  
the Holy Trinity, 1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia,  
Pennsylvania.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: The church represents a fine example of Romanesque Revival  
style and was designed by a leading Philadelphia church  
architect, John Notman.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection:

1857 March 25th Breaking of the ground  
1857 March 25th Cornerstone laid  
1859 March 27th Church opened for service  
1868 Church tower completed

2. Architects: John Notman (1810-1865) of Philadelphia, architect of  
main structure.  
The 1868 tower was designed by George W. and William D. Hewitt of  
Philadelphia, architects.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>
October 24, 1856	Caleb Jones, Mary A. Jones, John Bohlen, L. Montgomery Bond, Mary A. Bond, Lemuel Coffin, Annantine M. Coffin, John M. Hale and Elizabeth (wife)	Church of the Holy Trinity

(Source: Philadelphia City Hall, Records of Deeds, 2S22-93)

4. Original plans and construction: Notman's original plans were generally followed throughout, but not without delay. "In December, 1866, while Phillips Brooks was Rector, a serious dispute arose about the advisability of carrying out the original plan to put a steeple on the church." A. H. Vinton, the first Rector, wanted a "beautiful spire 230' high." Mr. Brooks, in a letter written at that date to his father in Boston, remarks: "I have just broken my head against my Vestry in an attempt to put a tower harmonious and solid on my church. I have failed. It is to be a spire, taller than anything in town; not bad and not good." An original drawing among the American Institute of Architects papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), however, shows John Notman's design for a tower of the same proportions as the one later completed by George Hewitt, a pupil of John Notman.
5. Alterations and additions:
  - 1880 Church reopened after entire remodeling of interior
  - 1882 Chimes played for the first time
  - 1894 Present Rectory occupied, now the Parish House, 1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia.
  - 1914 Interior renovated, aisles tiled, new lights installed and interior "frescoed."
  - 1942 Murals depicting The Nativity in honor of Phillips Brooks were painted in the chancel by Hildreth Meiere of New York.

Notable stained and painted glass windows added through the years:

South aisle (east to west)

Window No. 1 - Illustrates a parable by the Sea of Galilee made by Tiffany.

Window No. 2 - "The Light of the World," inspired by the painting by William Holman Hunt; made by Tiffany.

Window No. 6 - Epistle to the Hebrews (I:6-7). Made by Henry Holiday, London.

Window No. 7 - Call of Levi (Matthew). Made by Clayton and Bell, London.

North aisle (east to west)

Window No. 4 - Christ with Mary and Martha. Signed, "LVC  
OLIVER MERSON, 1894."

South side above gallery

Window No. 4 - Moses carrying the tables of the Law. Made  
by Henry Holiday, London.

- B. Historical Context: The church's construction was made possible through funds donated by the affluent Philadelphians who had recently moved out of the downtown area to the more fashionable Rittenhouse Square.

Phillips Brooks, second rector (1862-1869), who was later to become Rector of Trinity Church, Boston, and Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts, wrote the Christmas hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem," for which Lewis H. Redner, organist of Holy Trinity, composed the music.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Notable exterior features include the corner tower, pinnacles and arched openings. The interior has a three-aisle plan and includes stained glass windows, galleries, a clerestory and an apsidal chancel.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good, but with uncomplimentary repair work to stone exterior.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 74' x 125' (three-bay front by approximately nine bays, including tower, plus apse).
2. Foundations: Granite set in mortar; brick piers.
3. Walls: Brownstone ashlar throughout. Coarse sand mortar patchwork is visible in some areas (punched and gouged for textural effect).
4. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main (east) elevation has one central door and two side doors. All have triple Norman arches with

chevron moldings and engaged jamb columns with ornamental capitals. There is also a similar but plainer door on the north elevation.

- b. Windows, vents, and niches: Triple Norman arches with chevron moldings. Interlaced arcade above main entry.

5. Stairs: Concrete entrance steps.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Corbel blocks support eaves and cornices.

7. Tower: 30' x 30', 85' high; paired openings with stone louvers; semi-circular tops; four small corner spires with stone balustrade on top of tower.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Main (east) doorway with one side doorway each side leads to a three-bay vestibule (stairs north and south) which in turn leads through swinging doors to a three-aisled nave (eight bays east to west), an apsidal chancel, and the side pews.
2. Stairways: Two open string stairs in the vestibule area lead to the north and south galleries. They have cast-iron columnar balusters and wooden handrails. Below these stairs are the wooden stairways leading to the basement.
3. Flooring: Vestibule has 24" x 24" reticulate stone pavers of alternating dull red and gray-green. The floors of main aisle and side aisles are of waxed brick; carpeting under pews.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster with stencil work; wooden semicircular arches with chevron moldings.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Gallery doorways topped by heavy plaster molding on palmette corbel blocks. (Other doors were not recorded).
  - b. Windows: Stained glass windows. See Alterations and additions for some information.

6. Trim: Walnut trim, paneled and carved. Eight wooden brackets support north and south galleries which have round-arched front panels in walnut. Ceiling beams on nave walls have corbels. (This information is incomplete).
7. Hardware: Original floor grilles. (This information is incomplete).
8. Mechanical equipment:
  1. Heating: Floor registers (formerly serviced by five separate furnaces).
  2. Lighting: Electric hanging fixtures of brass with thick opaque glass insets.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces east, across from Rittenhouse Square.
2. Walks, driveways: A concrete sidewalk contiguous with the church spans full space to Nineteenth Street on east and to Walnut Street on north. A concrete parking area to south is contiguous with the church and contains a double flight of steps down to the basement.

Prepared by: William Bassett  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
August, 1964

Edited by: Susan McCown  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
October, 1984